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ABSTRACT

This workshop guide is designed for facilitators of programs that assist women in coping with their newly independent status as a result of divorce, widowhood, or other life transitions. The guide reviews the leadership skills needed for organizing a workshop, planning tips, recruitment, resources and other preparations. A format for the workshop or course series is suggested, including assertiveness and stress management, educational opportunities, career exploration, job seeking, and family communication. A sample application and a sample advertising flyer are also provided along with suggestions for incorporating audiovisual materials and guest speakers into the workshop/course program. (JAC)

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LIFE SKILLS FOR WOMEN IN TRANSITION: A WORKSHOP GUIDE

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CG 016180

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Introduction

Many recent books directed to women in transition, while useful, have left out crucial information on topics like welfare, high school equivalency tests, training opportunities for entry-level jobs, remedial reading and math, and services for the limited English speaker. In short, they have too often assumed that the woman in transition has already passed beyond needing these things.

Life Skills for Women in Transition tries to begin at the beginning. The imaginary woman for whom it was written does not necessarily have a high school diploma, nor does she necessarily read or write with ease. Her paid job experience may have been limited to factory work or domestic service, and she has most likely spent a good part of her life as a mother and homemaker. In many cases, she may be living below the poverty line and have little idea of how to go about looking for a better paying job, or indeed any paid job at all. Unfortunately, it is the person with few immediately recognizable job skills and a relatively low educational level who is often the least equipped to cope with divorce, separation, widowhood, termination of public assistance, or other life transitions.

The main reasons for holding a life skills workshop are to assist women to cope better with their newly independent status, help get them over their fears of looking for a job, and give them a better chance of actually finding and keeping a job or getting into school or a training program.

The workshop and materials were first developed and tested in Juneau, Alaska, with a group of almost fifty Alaskan women who were themselves experiencing a variety of life transitions. These ranged from divorce, separation, and widowhood to geographical relocation or seeing their children grow up and leave home. The ages of the women ranged from 20 to 79 and the group included Tlingit and Haida Indians, whites and Filipinos, both from rural areas and from the towns of Juneau, Sitka, Petersburg, and Ketchikan, Alaska.

What We Give You

We provide the materials to present your own workshop or course in "Life Skills for Women in Transition." The packet contains two books:

1. Life Skills for Women in Transition

2. Life Skills for Women in Transition: A Workshop Guide

The first book is for use by both the student and the workshop leader. We have had considerable success giving one book to each student, with the idea that the student keeps the book after the workshop is over. Students appreciate being able to read over the material before and after class, and Life Skills is also a workbook containing forms and inventories that are the basis for classroom exercises. Finally, Life Skills is a useful reference book on

job seeking, education, and other topics, indexed and written in fairly simple language and available at a low price. If you do not have the funds to order twenty-five copies of Life Skills, you can still photocopy selected chapters or exercises for group use.

Whether or not each student has her own copy of Life Skills, you as workshop leader are encouraged to use the narrative material as a basis for introductory remarks or short lectures you make to the class. Feel free to add supplementary materials of interest to your particular region or target group. Feel free also to pick and choose among the materials for those things that most interest you, or which you feel are most appropriate. It takes between 35 and 40 hours to present all the material, but that doesn't allow for breaks. If you use only some of the material, you can cut down on the number of hours.

Do You Have the Qualifications to Hold a Workshop?

Life Skills and the Life Skills Workshop Guide are designed to be used by people who don't necessarily have a teaching degree or teaching experience, but who do communicate well with other people and who are willing to work hard.

The main qualifications for organizing a workshop are:

1. Commitment to following through and doing a good job.

2. Relative confidence in your ability to work with people and persuade them to help you.

3. Ability to take initiative in getting workshop space, finding housing if that turns out to be necessary, doing recruitment, and gathering support from your community.

4. Some organizational skills.

The main qualifications for teaching a workshop are:

1. Some confidence in your ability to speak in front of groups.

2. Willingness to study the Life Skills book.

3. Some knowledge of community resources (where to go for food stamps, counseling, day care, etc., in your community).

4. A value-free orientation to the people with whom you will be working. If you disapprove of, or are shocked by, women who are divorced, unwed mothers, in common-law marriages, or on welfare, you are not a good person to lead a workshop. Similarly, you can't have the attitude of "Well, why didn't you get a high school diploma?" or "Why did you let your husband handle all the accounts?" and so on. To lead this type of workshop well, you have to be able to take people as they are.

The two jobs of organizing and teaching can be combined by one particularly energetic person or they can be divided up among two or more people (the latter is preferable). Useful things to have in your background for either of these jobs are:

1. Work as a community volunteer in politics, in your church or synagogue, or in a minority or women's organization, especially if you ever held an office in any of these groups.

2. Personal experience with divorce, widowhood, going on or off welfare, or another serious life transition.

3. Fund-raising experience through a church, synagogue, club, or any other organization.

4. Experience with different types of social services, either as a consumer (user) or as an advocate for other people.

5. Experience working with women or women's organizations.

6. Experience looking for a job, or working in a variety of jobs.

Beginning to Plan a Workshop

The following questions will have to be answered early in your planning process:

1. What is your target group? Female heads of household? Displaced homemakers? Rural women? Women of a particular ethnic origin? Women who have been divorced, separated, or widowed? Women living in a particular town? Any women in transition (broadly defined)? Anyone who is interested?

2. How many people will there be in the workshop? Life Skills was written for a workshop with 20 to 25 people in it, but the materials have also been used successfully with smaller groups. Twenty-plus people are a lot to handle alone, especially on topics like resume writing, when most people require some individual attention. If you are putting on the workshop yourself with no assistance, keep it small.

3. What are the main needs of your target group? There is a great deal of material in Life Skills, and you don't have to use all of it. For example, the three units "Career Exploration," "Job Seeking," and "On the Job" can easily be presented without the other parts. Pick and choose, based on the kinds of people you anticipate will be in the workshop.

4. In what format will you present the workshop?

   a. A one-week workshop, 9 to 5, Monday through Saturday, with many breaks.

b. A course spread out over several months, which meets twice weekly for one and a half hours.

c. A one-day workshop, in which you present only one unit, say, "Job Seeking" or "Starting Out."

d. Can you offer the course for credit through a local community college?

5. Will you have to transport people by plane, boat, or bus to come to the workshop, or will you just offer it for people in your immediate locale? If you <u>are</u> bringing people from far away, what arrangements can you make to house and feed them? Keep in mind that the majority of your students won't be able to afford to pay for their own food and lodging.

6. Who will actually teach the workshop: you, another person, or a group of people? Will you have guest speakers? Will you have leaders for each small group?

7. Where are some possible places where you could hold your workshop? The local library? A school? A private house?

8. Between what dates (approximately) do you intend to hold the workshop?

9. How much will it cost to present the workshop? Consider the probable costs for classroom space, staff, child-care workers, recruitment flyers, film rental if you decide to show films, buying <u>Life Skills</u> for everyone, postage, and so on. Try to get as many of these as you can for free.

Advisory Board

You may not need an advisory board if you already have a strong institutional affiliation and easy access to free classroom space, and if you are fairly confident that you already have community support for your project. If you are unsure about any of these things, an advisory committee might be a good idea, though assembling a group of people is a lot of work and will further delay the time when you actually hold the workshop.

Advisory board members can:

1. Give you advice about recruitment, narrowing of goals, etc., especially if they are people who have gone through some life transitions of their own.

2. Increase your credibility and give you greater community support, especially if they include representatives from your target group. Remember that programs for women raise hostility in many parts of the country. Your advisory board, if carefully chosen, can help to ease this hostility.

3. Perhaps be in a position to make sure free classroom space, free housing, free postage, or free guest speakers come your way.

Advisory boards generally consist of very busy people who won't be willing or able to do much extra work beyond turning up for meetings, though they may be willing to put in a good word for you when necessary. Don't ask too much of them, and be ready to do your own legwork. In most cases, you should have your course of action decided on before you consult with your advisory committee. Their job is to comment on what you've decided, to decide among clearly defined choices, and to suggest revision of plans where necessary. When you choose your board, try to include persons from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and age groups with a range of life experiences. Be sure to include some persons who might have access to free space, photocopying, mailing, etc., for example, people from community colleges, minority organizations, churches or synagogues, schools, charitable organizations, or women's clubs. Make sure that you don't put anyone on your board who is hostile to programs for women.

Where to Hold Your Workshop

Decide on the time and place where you want to hold the workshop and reserve the place in advance, getting the promise in writing, if possible. That means knowing exactly how long you want it, for how many people, and at what times. Try to get free space from a school, church, or community organization. The following should be considerations:

1. Does the space contain anything resembling a classroom, with desks, chairs, and a blackboard? A room with one long table and wall space to put up big pieces of butcher's paper might also work if your group is small enough.

2. If you intend to have small-group discussions, are there small rooms close by, or can people meet in corners of a single large room? Most of the small-group discussions will also work in larger groups, so if your class is relatively small, 15 or fewer, you might not need small-group discussion space.

3. Are there facilities for day care nearby, or could they be set up? Remember that many mothers will be unable to attend a workshop unless there is some provision made for child care. If you plan to provide child care, try to arrange for a children's room that is close enough so that mothers can see their children on breaks, but far enough away so that they won't be distracted from what's going on in the classroom if their children cry or misbehave. Make sure you have trustworthy, experienced babysitters. You can cut down somewhat on the number of children, or limit the number to children under six, by holding classes within regular school hours, say, 9 to 3, with an hour off for lunch.

4. Is the workshop location relatively easy to get to on public transportation? If it isn't, will it be possible to bus people there?

Don't assume that your students will have cars. In the groups which first used these materials, only about 15 percent of the people knew how to drive, and perhaps 10 percent had access to a car. In rural areas, transportation to and from the class may be your biggest problem, so think about it in advance. In urban centers with high crime rates, take into account perceived dangers of traveling at night if you plan to hold part or all of the workshop at night.

Recruitment

In running a successful recruitment campaign you must always have in mind whom you are trying to reach. The following are some ways to recruit; if necessary, use all of them:

1. Make up flyers or posters about your workshops and post them around town. Try to make your flyers professional-looking by using stencil sets or hiring a professional designer (who might cost quite a bit), and have them offset or copied on a good photocopier. Your flyer should be clear and to the point, with as few words as possible and with the letters large enough to be read at a distance. Unprofessional, hand-scrawled flyers don't reflect well on your workshop (see Appendix for a sample flyer). In general, your flyer should contain:

   a. Some information on what the workshop will be about.

   b. Some indication of whom the workshop is intended for. Don't sound needlessly exclusive, however. Phrases like "For women only" are bound to create hostility, whereas "Especially designed for divorced, separated, or widowed women" or the title "Life Skills for Women in Transition" lets women know your emphasis, but doesn't make people angry. Be sure to state that a high school diploma is not required.

   c. The place, time, and length of the workshop.

   d. The cost, if any. If it's free, say so. It is strongly suggested that this workshop be held free of charge, as you will needlessly exclude low-income women if you charge even a small fee.

   e. Information about whether child care and/or transportation are provided.

   f. Information on how to register for the workshop.

   g. A number to call for further information.

Here are a few suggestions for places to post flyers:

Legal aid offices

Laundromats and supermarkets

Welfare and food stamp offices

Medical clinics and hospital emergency rooms

Neighborhood associations

Black, Hispanic, Native American, or other minority organizations

Beauty parlors

Women's centers and women's shelters

YWCAs

Schools, especially ones that are holding adult education, literacy, or high school equivalency classes

Day-care centers

2. Make up a public service announcement to be aired by local radio or TV stations. All stations, including commercial ones, donate a certain amount of time to public service announcements, and often local stations will have a special community calender to announce events or programs of general interest. Make your public service announcement short and clear, and include a number to call for further information. Many stations won't air anything that takes more than thirty seconds to read aloud. Address your letter to the station's community relations representative and get it in at least two weeks before you want it aired.

3. Send out flyers and a letter of introduction to any community service agencies or groups who might be likely to refer people to your workshop.

4. Get a notice into church or synagogue bulletins.

Note: Make sure to keep records of all people calling to inquire about the workshop. Index cards with the name, address, and phone number of the interested person work well. You may want to have people fill out and send in an application form. If so, make it short, clear, and easy to read (see Appendix for sample application form). Try to make application forms readily available in several different places.

Guest Speakers/Audiovisual Materials

All guest speakers and audiovisual materials mentioned here are optional and are not figured into the time estimates. Arrange for guest speakers pretty far in advance and be clear on whether or not you will be able to pay them for their services. Many government agencies and even private companies will send out speakers free of charge, but the best person to present a particular topic might be a person you would have to pay.

Arrange for film rentals and use of audiovisual equipment very far in advance. Some libraries lend films and equipment free and sometimes equipment can be borrowed, but start planning early. If you send away for a film on a rental basis, you sometimes have to do it a month or more in advance in order to get it just when you want it.

Other Preparations

1. Send away for some of the books listed in the Resources sections of Life Skills, or make sure they are available in your local library.

2. Enlist the help of other people. If you expect to have more than about a dozen participants, try to recruit some small-group leaders who can help lead discussions and assist in other ways. It's best if your small-group leaders and other staff represent your target group; e.g., if most of your students are Hispanic, most of your small-group leaders should be Hispanic. If you don't pay for anything else, try to pay your small-group leaders. In choosing your small-group leaders, look for enthusiastic people who are active in their communities, have recognized leadership ability, and who have gone through life transitions of their own. It's helpful, though not essential, for them to be able to express themselves fairly well in writing, as they can then help students for whom writing is difficult or threatening.

3. Hold a short orientation session with your small-group leaders. There's no need for this to last more than about one and a half hours. The main functions of small-group leaders are:

   a. Being friendly and encouraging.

   b. Keeping discussions on track and helping to make sure that everyone gets an equal chance to speak.

   c. Making sure role-playing exercises don't degenerate into free-for-alls.

   d. Giving feedback to workshop leader on ways to improve the workshop.

   e. Providing extra help in the difficult chapters, most notably:

      Colleges and Universities
      Finding Information about Careers
      Setting Goals for Your Career
      The Whole Person Resume/Job Applications
      Cover Letters

4. Read up on role playing in The Role Play Technique: A Handbook for Management and Leadership Practice by Norman R. Maier, Allen R. Solem, and Ayesha A. Maier, published by University Associates, La Jolla, California. This resource is especially useful in working with Native American women, who may be reluctant to participate in role plays.

5. Arrange in advance to have your group take a career assessment test if an appropriate one is available in your area.

6. Collect information and flyers or brochures on different services available in the community, for example:

   Employment agencies

   CETA or other job training programs

   Emotional counseling, family counseling, etc. Make sure they are programs that can be paid by Medicaid or that have sliding scale fees.

   Local community colleges (have several catalogues on hand)

   High school equivalency preparation classes and information on when and where high school equivalency tests are given

   Remedial reading and math programs (sometimes called Adult Basic Education)

   Legal aid

   Debt/credit management services

   English as a Second Language classes

   Programs for battered women

   Alcoholism or drug abuse services

   Child care, especially for children under five

   Women's centers or other programs for women

   Public assistance (General Relief and Aid to Families with Dependent Children), Medicaid, and food stamps

   Programs for older people

7. If you are the person who will be leading the workshop, prepare yourself by carefully reading the entire Life Skills book, especially those parts you will be presenting. When using Life Skills as a basis for lectures, you should try to cover the main points in your own words, if possible. Often it helps to underline in advance those parts you feel are most important. With the stories and examples, it's often best to read them just as they appear. If you haven't done much teaching before, practice lecturing aloud to yourself or family or friends. Try to sound enthusiastic, but natural. Practice looking and sounding self-confident.

Don't worry that students already have the main points of your lecture in their hands. We've found that most people prefer this, especially if they've been out of school for some years and are feeling insecure about being in a classroom.

Suggested Time Line

Month 1: Read Life Skills and Life Skills Workshop Guide and make preliminary plans as to place, time, target group, workshop leader(s), small-group leader(s), etc.

Month 2: Choose advisory board and hold a meeting to discuss plans (optional).

Do some preliminary fund raising if necessary.

Send away for additional copies of Life Skills for Women in Transition (one for each student; estimate number needed).

Arrange for space to hold workshop; get definite reservation.

Arrange for housing and transportation where necessary.

Month 3: Send away for films or books (optional).

Design and have printed flyers or other promotional material.

Write public service announcement and arrange to have it aired on radio or TV.

Do additional fund raising if necessary.

Month 4: Start recruitment.

Arrange for career assessment testing if desired.

Arrange for guest speakers (optional).

Arrange for child care.

Select participants, if more people apply than you have space for.

Hold an orientation session for small-group leaders (optional).

Make final travel and housing arrangements where necessary.

Month 5: Hold workshop.

Note: If you are in a rural area where communication is difficult or where you have to bring people in by plane, bus, etc., to take the workshop, it may take longer for you to organize a workshop, and cost you more money. On the other hand, if you already have a place to hold the workshop; have access to free photocopying or mailing; don't need to transport, house, or feed your students; and can get child care donated or provided cheaply, you could save several months, and present a workshop using little money.

UNIT I - STARTING OUT

The first unit introduces the student to some of the major issues confronting the newly independent woman.

CHAPTER 1 - THE WOMAN ON HER OWN (Time: 1 to 1½ hours)

This chapter emphasizes two main themes:

1. Realizing that our feelings about being alone are not unique.

2. Realizing that through mutual support and peer counseling we can come to terms more easily with life transitions.

The statements in this chapter were made by real women in transition. If you already have good rapport with your class, you might ask for volunteers to read the different statements. Stay away from requesting individuals to read them, as this can make people who aren't confident about their reading ability very nervous.

Before dividing people up for the discussion, explain to them what they are to discuss. If you have small-group leaders already chosen, so much the better; if you don't, pick a person each time to be recorder. After the discussion is over, this person will report briefly to the entire class on her group's decisions. Make sure throughout your workshop to rotate recorders, so that it doesn't look as if you're playing favorites. After talking briefly about Peer Counseling, ask for volunteers to read the different roles in the Support Group, or ask your group leaders to do it, if you're sure they are sufficiently confident about reading aloud. If you read a part, try not to cast yourself as the organizer of the group (Mabel). One of the things you should be trying to do throughout the workshop is to encourage other people to take leadership roles, even if only symbolically.

Because wife battering is such a volatile subject and not discussed publicly too often, students will sometimes want to spend more time on that topic. If the discussion leads naturally in that direction and still seems productive, it should be allowed to continue. Don't feel obliged to break up into smaller groups if discussion is going along well in a larger group.

Guest Speaker (optional)

If there is a shelter or support group for battered women in your area, see if you can get a speaker from one of these organizations to come and talk about how peer counseling is used in her organization. Someone from a rape crisis center might also have some useful things to say on the subject of peer counseling and mutual support. There are also mutual support groups for widows and for single mothers in some areas, any or all of which might supply you with a speaker.

Films (optional)

"We Will Not Be Beaten" - a film produced at Transition House, a shelter for battered women in Massachusetts. Contains excellent footage of women talking to each other about their experiences. Black and white, 41 minutes. $40 rental, $395 purchase. Write Transition House Films, 120 Boylston Street, #707, Boston, MA 02116.

"Who Remembers Mama?" - a film (or video cassette) on displaced homemakers available for rental or purchase from Media Projects, Inc., 5215 Homer Street, Dallas, TX 75206.

CHAPTER 2 - ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING (Time: 3 to 4 hours)

This chapter provides an introduction to assertiveness training. It defines what assertiveness is and is not, and gives some techniques for becoming more assertive. Stress to your students that this is only an introduction and that assertiveness is something a person must work on over time. Throughout the entire workshop you should try to encourage students to be more assertive. The assertiveness techniques mentioned here can be useful in a number of contexts, including job seeking and family relationships.

The Passive/Aggressive/Indirect-Aggressive/Assertive exercise is a lot of fun and good for encouraging class participation. Have some adjectives or descriptive phrases in mind for each category before you start so that you can help your class along. Here are the descriptions that one class developed:

Passive	Aggressive
Can't say no	Loud
Easily taken advantage of	Impolite
Resentful, but won't act	Sometimes violent
Fearful	Insensitive
Lacks self-confidence	Insecure about self
Thinks others are more important than self	Doesn't have many friends
Speaks softly	Lonely
Unhappy	Trying to be macho
Isn't respected by others	Angry
	Pushy

Indirect-Aggressive	Assertive
Manipulative	Stands up for principles
Sneaky	Does things even if they make her nervous or afraid at first
Fearful of losing affection	Reasonable but forceful
Vengeful	Not easily taken advantage of
Afraid of direct arguments	Likes herself
Unhappy	Prepared
Doesn't like self	Helps others, but also helps herself
Willing to hurt others	

The Improving Your Self-Concept exercises are easy and fun. When presenting them, inject a personal note by mentioning some self-defeating thoughts you sometimes have. The first two Techniques for Communicating Assertively are fairly short and simple, and if you split your assertiveness training work into two sections, this would be a good halfway point. The DESC technique can take a considerable amount of time to present and work on, even in small groups. Here is a place where small-group leaders who are already familiar with the technique could be very useful.

If people are interested in further work on assertiveness, you could direct them to some of the books in the Resources section or to a more detailed assertiveness training class if any is available in your area.

CHAPTER 3 - DEALING WITH STRESS/TIME MANAGEMENT/DECISION MAKING
(Time: 1½ hours)

The main point of the section on Stress is to get women deliberately to devote time to relief of stress, in short, to take some time for themselves.

Films (optional)

There are a number of films about stress in circulation, though many are oriented toward business and white-collar (usually male) workers. Check with a film library to see if there is one you could borrow for free. Management/Business departments in community colleges sometimes have films on stress. If you can't get one free, you might be better off doing without a film on this topic than paying rental costs.

The Time Management section can be presented very quickly, as it's just common sense advice. In some workshops, small, inexpensive pocket appointment/calendar books have been handed out as gifts to the class.

Decision Making gives your students an opportunity to think analytically as a group. The writing is best done on a blackboard. The part in which students brainstorm solutions is always very interesting. Be sure to stress that no one solution is the best for everyone. In Step 5, other alternatives may be generated beyond whether or not to quit the accounting class. At the end of the session be sure to summarize the steps you have gone through to arrive at the decision.

CHAPTER 4 - MONEY (Time: 3 hours)

The purpose of the opening inventory is to permit students to assess their money management skills and to realize the relationship between lack of knowledge about financial matters and general lack of self-confidence. This is a good time to pass around some books on money management that you've bought or borrowed from the library and to announce any courses on personal finance that are being given in the community (many adult education programs offer them).

Speaker (optional)

Your National Organization for Women local chapter may be able to supply you with a speaker on the subject of women and credit. Credit bureaus sometimes also have people who will do this. It is important that the person you get is up-to-date on recent laws that prohibit discrimination against women in granting credit. Ask your speaker if she can bring any pamphlets on credit.

The section on Public Assistance is mainly informational, but may provoke discussion. Try to have some idea of the network of services in your state before attempting to lead a discussion on this subject. If your class has many single mothers in it, you can be pretty sure that at least some will be quite knowledgeable about public assistance through personal experience--you may be yourself. If a student volunteers information about being on welfare, so much the better for you and the whole class. If not, don't press the issue. Two useful areas to which to steer spontaneous discussion are:

1. The importance of Medicaid, especially for women with young children, who would most likely not be able to get a job that offers good medical benefits.

2. Why people who are getting public assistance, food stamps, Social Security supplements, etc., are so often treated in degrading, disrespectful ways, and how this can be changed.

Being Assertive about Money Matters is best covered in small groups, and preferably with small-group leaders. Don't forget to have your small groups report back to the whole class here and elsewhere. The Budgeting/Money Values section, including the "How I Want to Spend My Money" inventory, can be assigned as homework and discussed later in class, or the whole section can be done in class. Saving Money is a good opportunity to share tips on saving, but it shouldn't be allowed to go on too long. The discussion which ends the chapter has been carried on fruitfully with the whole class together as well as in smaller groups.

UNIT II-EDUCATION

This unit describes only some of the opportunities available for furthering one's education. Others you should be sure to mention, if they exist in your community, are remedial reading, writing, and math (often called Adult Basic Education, or ABE), and English as a Second Language classes. If possible, say where these classes are offered, and whether or not they are free.

CHAPTER 1 - HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY (Time: 45 minutes)

Much of this chapter can be presented in a lecture format. Find out in advance where in your community people would go to take the test or to find a preparation program. In some communities the High School Equivalency Test (and high school equivalency preparation courses) may be taken in Spanish. Check whether this is true in your locale. When you talk about Control of Stress and Hints for Taking the GED Test, it's a good idea to pass around sample GED preparation books or copies of sample GED questions for people to look at. Note the useful Resources at the end of the chapter.

Speaker (optional)

Ask a woman you know who took and passed the High School Equivalency Test to come and talk about her experiences and the things that helped her along the way.

CHAPTER 2 - COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (Time: 1½ hours)

Much of this chapter is to be presented in lecture form. An important thing to stress is the number of women who are now going to college at the ages of thirty, forty, fifty, and older. When you discuss Reading a College Catalogue, you should have with you enough catalogues, preferably from nearby schools, so that each student can have one. The task of picking a degree program is more difficult than it looks and some students may have difficulty with it. If you suspect this may be the case, simply demonstrate picking first semester courses for an imaginary student and go on to the next section. In the section on How to Pay for College, stress the importance of applying well in advance for financial aid. It's useful to have a few financial aid application forms to pass around for people to see. In the section on Study Skills, stress the importance of having adequate reading ability, and also the need to take responsibility on one's own for catching up on missed lectures, finding out when papers are due, etc. It's a good idea to have a copy or two of Barron's Profiles of American Colleges or Lovejoy's College Guide on hand when you talk about colleges (see Resources). These books are in almost all libraries.

Speaker (optional)

Get a mature woman who is presently in college (or has recently graduated) to talk about her experiences.

CHAPTER 3 - JOB TRAINING (Time: 1 hour)

You may want to wait and present this section after people have had an opportunity to explore different careers more fully. You may want to diagram the different CETA services on the board. Try to get as much information as you can from the people in the class. Many of them may have had experiences with government training programs, trade schools, or private industry programs and can talk about their experiences with the rest of the group.

The section on the armed services is mainly for informational purposes--you may wish to omit it, particularly since the different branches of the military are relatively inhospitable to women at this time and quite hostile to single parents. It is good for some interesting discussions. The Resources at the end are very useful, especially for finding out about accreditation of private trade schools.

Speaker(s) (optional)

If you live in a large town, ask the local CETA office for a speaker, or hold a panel discussion with a CETA official, recruiters from some trade schools, a representative from a large company that does training (say, the telephone company), and a military recruiter.

CHAPTER 4 - COMMUNITY RESOURCES (Time: 1½ hours plus several hours of field work)

In describing How to Become a Community Resource, borrow a Rolodex or index referral file from someone who does a lot of referrals, for example, a social worker. Maybe you have a file of your own already.

The Agency Evaluation exercise works best when you confine people to within a mile or so radius of where the workshops are being held. Alternatively, you might bus everyone into the nearest town for the afternoon. This is a frightening exercise in some ways, but it is a very rewarding and even inspiring one, especially if people bind all their evaluations together into a "book" at the end. Be sure to have people report back on what they have found and hand in their evaluation forms.

Encourage face-to-face interviews, conducted individually. If you have a few extremely shy people in your class, you may:

1. Send them to places where you are pretty certain the personnel will be cooperative, e.g., libraries.

2. Have them interview over the phone, though some people find this even more threatening.

3. Send them two at a time to interviews.

For the section on libraries, it's best actually to visit a nearby library and take a tour. Arrange this in advance with the library. Be sure at some point to show students where to find books on careers or job seeking.

Being an Assertive Citizen of Your Community urges people to become active, but also to acquire potentially salable skills and add new meaning to life through volunteer activities. The exercise attached to this section is best done as a "group portrait," especially since in this section you are trying to encourage people to work together for common ends.

UNIT III-CAREER EXPLORATION

This unit is intended to:

1. Assist people in choosing a career goal.

2. Encourage them to research that goal carefully.

CHAPTER 1 - EXPLORING WORK VALUES (Time: 1½ hours)

The first exercise is best done on a blackboard divided into four columns, one for each of the four persons whose statement is recorded here. Students may use the blank spaces to record notes if they wish. The discussion of bad and good aspects of jobs is intended to get students to articulate work values. The values inventory "What Is Important to Me in a Job?" must be filled in individually, so allow enough time for this. Stress that there are no right or wrong answers and that everyone's values are different. End this section by reaffirming the importance of work values in deciding on a career goal.

CHAPTER 2 - KNOWING YOUR SKILLS (Time: 45 minutes)

In this chapter, you are trying to foster self-awareness and help people put greater value on the skills or characteristics they already possess. In this exercise try to get people to be as specific as possible in describing things they're proud of doing. The exciting part of this exercise is that it helps people realize how much they've learned, or how many skills they've demonstrated, through working as mothers, homemakers, or community volunteers.

CHAPTER 3 - CAREER ASSESSMENT TESTS (Time: Lecture, 20 minutes; testing time varies)

Give a short lecture about career assessment tests before your group goes to take one. You might mention that career assessment tests, unlike other tests, can really be fun to take. Several weeks or months prior to the workshop, you should have made arrangements for your whole group to take a career or vocational aptitude test. Check with your nearest state employment agency or community college to find out what tests are available, and whether they can be given to groups. Look for:

1. Tests that don't take too long and aren't too hard to read.

2. Tests that can be scored immediately or are self-scoring. Some tests have to be sent away for scoring; you want to avoid these, if possible.

3. Tests that are not too technically oriented. For example, the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery contains many electronics and mechanics questions; these will only depress most of your students.

CHAPTER 4 - NONTRADITIONAL JOBS FOR WOMEN (Time: 1 hour)

Since nontraditional jobs are new to most women, a lot of information is included here, much of which can be presented in lecture form. This is a good topic to make people think in new career directions. Even if they don't go into nontraditional jobs, they may still pass this information on to their children or friends. Either speakers or audiovisual materials are recommended for optimum impact.

Speaker (optional)

See if you can get a woman who is working in a nontraditional area, especially in an apprenticeship program, to come and speak to your workshop about her experiences.

Filmstrip (optional)

"Women at Work: Women in Trade and Technical Jobs," by the Boston YWCA - a slide/sound presentation of three women, their co-workers, and supervisors talking about their experiences in nontraditional work. It is one of the best media pieces around on this subject, as it concentrates on the words and lives of real women. Write for information to Education Development Center, 55 Chapel Street, Newton, MA 02160.

CHAPTER 5 - FINDING INFORMATION ABOUT CAREERS (Time: 2 hours)

Many students, particularly those who aren't used to doing much reading, will need individual attention during this section. If you suspect that many people will have trouble, you could try photocopying information on a particular career from the Occupational Outlook Handbook, passing the copies out to everyone, and then demonstrating how you would fill in the career information sheet. After you've done this, get your students to do it themselves. Unfortunately, some of the most useful and up-to-date books, ones like the Dictionary of Occupational Titles and the Occupational Outlook Handbook, are indexed in a very confusing way, even for people who are used to doing research. You are strongly advised to practice using these books before you attempt to teach a class with them. This section will work best if you have enough books for everyone, though everyone doesn't necessarily need to have the same book. You may have to visit a library as a group to get enough books, or you may be able to borrow, send away for, or buy enough for your needs. Don't abandon your students while they're working on this part. Help them find the information they need and, if necessary, have them copy phrases directly out of the books.

Some students may not be able to complete more than one form in the time available. Encourage students to present their findings to others in the workshop. If possible, get small-group leaders to help people with their information search.

CHAPTER 6 - SETTING GOALS FOR YOUR CAREER (Time: 1½ hours)

This chapter picks up where the last one left off. Again, students will need a lot of individual attention. In fact, if your timing and personnel permit, you might work on this part on a one-to-one basis rather than in a group setting. Encourage students to read the sample case of the woman who wants to go to forestry school (The Way to Get There). Work closely with students on their job objectives. The job objective need not be quite as detailed as the ones that appear here. It could simply read, "A job as a salesclerk" or "A job as an electrician's helper." The Objective in Five Years should be closely tied to the career inventory that begins the chapter. Not all students will necessarily want or need a five-year objective. If necessary, you can change it to Objective in One Year or Objective in Two Years. Make sure that students take stock of basic reading and math abilities in filling out the career inventory. The job may not require a high school degree, but it might very well require at least an eighth-grade reading level. Have your career reference books within easy reach for this section.

UNIT IV-JOB SEEKING

This unit attempts to demystify the job-seeking process. The heart of it is the chapters on "The Whole Person Resume/Job Applications" and "The Interview." In presenting this unit, you should spend most of your time on these two chapters.

CHAPTER 1 - UNCOVERING JOB OPENINGS AND READING JOB NOTICES (Time: 1 hour)

The point you are trying to get across in this chapter is that a person must actively seek out the better-paying, more challenging jobs. In most groups you will discover that the method of job finding that is most common is number 1, hearing about the job from a friend or family member, or number 5, everyone knew this employer was hiring. It's important to stress that for most jobs, whether well or poorly paid, it's important whom you know, but that a person can make special efforts to get to know the right people. Method number 8 involves taking initiative in the job-seeking process, rather than simply waiting passively for jobs to turn up in the newspaper or at the employment agency. Make the point that many good job openings, even these days, don't ever turn up in the newspaper or at employment agencies. The section on Reading Job Notices is designed to help people "read between the lines" in job notices. Be sure to stress the fact that when people apply for jobs that require educational credentials they don't possess, they must make a special effort to try to prove that their experience makes up for their lack of education.

CHAPTER 2 - THE WHOLE PERSON RESUME/JOB APPLICATIONS (Time: 5 to 6 hours)

There are many ways to write a resume, but we concentrate on only one in this chapter. You may wish to use a resume format different from the two shown at the end of this chapter, but in general, most of the same rules apply. Regardless of the type of resume you are having your students write, you should stress:

1. The importance of including job duties in the resume, rather than simply listing the job.

2. The vital importance of including volunteer jobs just as if they were paid jobs. This is important also for job applications. Many students will resist giving themselves credit for volunteer work, so make this point over and over again.

3. The importance of including paid or volunteer jobs even if they were performed a long time ago, and of including addresses for these jobs.

4. The importance of making as many parts as possible of the resume relate to the job objective.

You may run into problems in this chapter with students who haven't written anything in years and who are struck with paralysis when they try to write a resume. One solution to this is to try to get people to use the sample resumes at the back of this chapter, or others that you've photocopied, as models. Give people a great deal of encouragement and make helpful suggestions. Stress to them that spelling and grammar don't matter in the first draft. It may be simpler for some students to fill in a job application form first, and <u>then</u> go on to write a traditional resume which simply lists the jobs and the duties. As a last resort, you can do a resume <u>for</u> someone by asking her about the jobs she has done and writing down the information in the resume format yourself. Remember not to leave out volunteer jobs or parenting/homemaking activities.

You will probably need to allow several class periods in order to cover resume writing sufficiently for almost everyone to write one. People who have not worked for pay in some years may have to do extra detective work to figure out the addresses or current telephone numbers of places they once worked. If a firm has gone out of business, it should still be included in the resume with a note that it has gone out of business, moved to another state, or whatever.

If you have sufficient clerical assistance, you may be able to have some resumes typed. If your workshop is quite large, this may be out of the question. A few people may have typewriters and could type their own, or could have someone they know do it for them. Try to go over all resumes before they reach their final form to fix spelling and work on effectiveness of expression. Keep in mind that the resume-writing process may be pretty frightening for many people, so be patient and supportive and give a lot of individual attention after class if necessary. Here's another place where assistants will come in handy. For the final copy, stress neatness.

It's a good idea to mention some of the different ways a resume can be used, for example:

1. In place of a job application.
2. Accompanying a job application.
3. To be given to interviewers.
4. As a reminder of what you've done so that you can describe it effectively in an interview.
5. To be mailed out or dropped off with prospective employers.

For the section on <u>Job Applications</u>, try photocopying for each student a sample of an application form used often in your area. Have the class fill out the application <u>after</u> you've given your talk on job applications; then go over it as if you were an employer. Be sure to check for neatness, full descriptions of duties performed, inclusion of volunteer jobs just as if they were paid jobs, and "red flag" answers like "Left because of pregnancy." "Left to take up family responsibilities" sounds better.

CHAPTER 3 - HOW TO WRITE A COVER LETTER (Time: 45 minutes)

This chapter is important mainly for people who will be mailing out resumes to employers. If most of your students won't be doing that, you could just cover the beginning section of this chapter (Task 1), which is useful for demonstrating how one makes personal contact with employers. Encourage the use of the phone book since most of your students will have easy access to it. The other reference books listed on the second page of this chapter can be found in most libraries. Alert your students to the fact that they can use the sample cover letters here as models even if you don't actually spend time on them in class.

CHAPTER 4 - THE INTERVIEW (Time: 2 to 3 hours)

Encourage your students to prepare in advance for interviews. Present the narrative in lecture form and, if possible, obtain specific information about "legal" and "illegal" questions in your state before talking about problem questions. You can get this information from the state Human Rights Commission and sometimes from a state employment agency. Try to spend as much time as possible practicing actual interviews. Also, try to gear each interview to the type of job the person is genuinely interested in. Letting students interview you first will give them greater confidence and get them into the swing of giving friendly criticism as well as encouragement.

UNIT V-ON THE JOB

This unit will help to give people who haven't worked for pay for a while a sense of what will be expected of them, as well as an idea of some of the issues that confront workers.

CHAPTER 1 - MAKING A GOOD IMPRESSION AND HAVING IT LAST (Time: 1 hour)

The two most important points to make here are:

1. People should try to maintain their self-respect, even at the beginning, when they're just learning a job.

2. People have to keep family problems from interfering with their work. Often this means they will have to plan in advance for child care, sick children, court appearances, and so on.

CHAPTER 2 - BEING ASSERTIVE ON THE JOB (Time: 1½ hours)

If you have not previously covered the chapter on assertiveness training, you may have to give a brief background statement on what assertiveness is, and how it differs from other kinds of behavior. In the first small-group exercise, ask people to make up assertive speeches, rather than just talk about what they would do in each of these sit ations.

For the sections Getting a Promotion and) ghting Discrimination, it's a good idea to have some pamphlets available on j rights (see Resources section for suggestions).

Speaker (optional)

Get someone from the Human Rights Commission, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Legal Aid Society, or National Organization for Women to talk about "Our Rights as Women Workers."

CHAPTER 3 - DEVELOPING A SUPPORT NETWORK (Time: 1½ hours)

More than anything else, this chapter is designed to stimulate discussion about how support networks have helped us in the past, and how we can form new networks. Before you discuss unions, especially if you don't personally have union experience, it would be a good idea to send away for materials on the Coalition of Labor Union Women (see Resources).

UNIT VI-FAMILY COMMUNICATION

This unit gives only the briefest of introductions to family communications and is intended mainly to encourage the exchange of information and experiences, in hopes that such exchanges will continue after the workshop is over.

CHAPTER 1 - COMMUNICATING WITH SMALL CHILDREN (Time: 1½ hours)

Be sure to go over the example before sending your students off into small groups. Encourage them to use the problem-solving form provided. The role playing can generate a lot of laughter, but is still generally useful. We have not provided any Resources section, in part because there is so much conflict of opinion over child rearing. You may notice that we have also tried for the most part to stay away from giving specific advice. You may wish to provide further suggestions for reading in this area, or your students may have suggestions.

Speaker (optional)

See if you can get a speaker from an already existing parents' group to talk about how the group was organized.

CHAPTER 2 - COMMUNICATING WITH TEENAGERS (Time: 1½ hours)

This chapter consists of a lecture plus discussion. Try to stress that parents shouldn't invest all their energies in their teenagers, that both parents and teenagers need to find other interests at this time. Try to reassure people that the children of single parents don't automatically become juvenile delinquents.

Speaker (optional)

See if you can find someone who was raised by a single parent and feels fairly happy about it to talk about her or his experiences growing up.

CHAPTER 3 - COMMUNICATING WITH A PARTNER (Time: 1½ to 2 hours)

Make sure to stress that the communication skills mentioned here will not necessarily save a relationship. They are merely techniques that may be useful if the other person will cooperate. Much of the chapter is devoted to values, especially the values people bring to long-term relationships. Make sure here and elsewhere that students aren't made to feel guilty about something they did or didn't do in a relationship that broke up.

Appendix

Send to:

SAMPLE APPLICATION

Margaret Hunt
University of Alaska, Juneau
11120 Glacier Highway
Juneau, Alaska 99803

LIFE SKILLS FOR WOMEN IN TRANSITION

February 9-13

This workshop is especially designed for women who have been divorced, separated, or widowed, or who are experiencing other serious life transitions. All applications made to the University of Alaska are completely confidential. All applications must be postmarked by February 1, 1982.

Name _____ Contact phone _____
Please print Yours or a friend's

Street address _____

Town or City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

OPTIONAL INFORMATION TO BE USED
ONLY FOR THE PURPOSES OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Birth date _____ Marital status _____

Ages of all children _____ Ethnic origin _____

Years of education completed (please circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
(High school diploma is not required for this program.)

Education beyond high school _____

_____

Areas of past work experience _____

_____

My present job is: Parent and/or homemaker _____

Other (please say what) _____

I am interested in this workshop because _____

_____

_____

The University of Alaska provides equal educational and employment opportunities for all, regardless of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, physical handicap, or veteran status.

LIFE SKILLS FOR WOMEN IN TRANSITION

--A FIVE-DAY WORKSHOP--

How to Cope Better with Divorce, Separation, Widowhood, or Being a Single Parent

- Getting an Education
- Career Exploration
- How to Find a Job
- Keeping Your Job Once You Have It

ALL FREE

High School Diploma Not Required

Time: Monday, August 16 - Friday, August 20, 1982
9 to 4 every day. Lunch provided.

Place: Allegiance Hall, Room 319
Bronx Community College
University and W. 181st St.
Bronx, New York 10453

Call 367-7300, ext. 636, for more information or to reserve a place in the workshop.

CHILD CARE PROVIDED FREE / WHEELCHAIR-ACCESSIBLE